WomenWeave Charitable Trust  
India  |  Apparel, Textiles for Home

A global platform for ancient handloom weaving

In today’s global economy India’s ancient arts of handloom and rural weaving are in jeopardy. Threatened by demographic shifts and economic stresses, young weavers are abandoning the craft and migrating to urban centers in search of better livelihoods. WomenWeave Charitable Trust supports women in handloom weaving by teaching them ways to make this traditional art a profitable, fulfilling, sustainable, and dignified method of income.

Handloom has a long history in India, the resulting materials used to craft women’s sarees and lungi, a traditional type of sarong worn mainly by men. Traditionally, young weavers learn the art from their parents but for the four million people employed in India’s handloom weaving sector, there are very few opportunities to learn about effective sales and distribution of their weaves. Handloom production and marketing are deeply fragmented in India, with middlemen controlling distribution, restricting the influence of weavers on business and trade negotiations. WomenWeave Charitable Trust’s Handloom School nurtures young weavers to make the most of their heritage, deal directly with the market, and understand market trends. Handloom artisans learn how to equitably participate in the global marketplace while honing their weaving skills. Artisans are trained in the application of their traditional designs but also encouraged to experiment in the use of different fibers, dyes, reeds, and loom sizes to create new designs that also appeal to a broader global market.

“We weave to pay for our children’s educations or to feed our families,” says senior weaver Sunita Arande. “It’s work we love because we’re all together facing the same challenges and sharing the same successes…We don’t know all the places our weaves go in this world, but we know that people everywhere like them very much.”